LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

My interest is as the parent of a child who will start his school career at St Mary’s Melrose after two years attending the school’s Kindergarten.

After long consideration, I have concluded that it is not my place here to explain the reasons I feel pushed to use the independent school system, nor to bemoan the state of the public provision of education. Having worked in further education (charitable education providers!) for twenty years, I have arguments that might extend beyond the four-page limit.

Instead I would like to limit my contribution to one issue - the impact of the rates review on my family. We have a household income of around £35k, and are therefore perhaps not the stereotypical user of a public school. The impact of the rates review seems likely to affect the bursary scheme among other public benefit provisions.

Our family has elected to save hard and spend little in order to give our son (and in future his sister) the best education we can find. We have opted to prioritise a particular educational environment over any other spending, for personal reasons. Should the bursary system be withdrawn or reduced, we will not be able to send our children to the school. The wealthier families will of course be able to direct some more funds, however reluctantly - but for us and other families who have opted to take some hard decisions because of a personal belief regarding the best situation for their child, the impact will not be simply financial. It will cause upheaval and hardship.

From my perspective, it seems that the impact of the rates review will be to polarise independent schools further, by removing from them the families who really do need the bursary system to come a way to meet them in their efforts to do the best for their children.

Yours, in some considerable distress at the uncertainty now lying ahead for my children and our family.